

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 EB-08 COME-00 TRSE-00 OMB-01 AGRE-00 /078 W

-----060316 200629Z /17

R 191359Z JAN 78

FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9616

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

DIA WASHDQ

JCS/SECDEF

USCINCEUR

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 0411

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV SY AG TS

SUBJ: FOREIGN MINISTRY REMARKS ON BOUMEDIENE'S
VISIT TO TUNIS

REF: TUNIS 0371 (DTG:171645Z JAN 78)

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1. EMBASSY POLITICAL OFFICER CALLED ON MINISTRY FOREIGN
AFFAIRS DIRECTOR FOR EUROPE/AMERICA MEJDOUB AFTERNOON
OF JANUARY 17 TO OBTAIN GOT OBSERVATIONS OF BOUMEDIENE'S
VISIT TO TUNIS (SEE FEFTEL). MEJDOUB SAID THAT BOUMEDIENE'S
STOP IN TUNIS WAS ARRANGED AT LAST MINUTE AFTER VISITING
13 OTHER COUNTRIES.

FOLLOWING IS SUMMARY OF MEJDOUB' REMARKS.

2. BILATERAL ISSUES WERE HARDLY DISCUSSED AS THERE ARE NO OUTSTANDING PROBLEMS EXISTING BETWEEN ALGERIA AND TUNISIA. BOUMEDIENE IN SOME OF HIS PUBLIC REMARKS DESCRIBED TUNISIAN/ALGERIAN RELATIONS AS "EXCELLENT" AND THIS ASSESSMENT IS CORRECT. THERE WAS SOME TALK ON FORTHCOMING MEETING OF ALGERIA/TUNISIA JOINT COMMISSION, BUT 90 PERCENT OF DISCUSSION CENTERED ON SAHARA AND MIDDLE EAST.

3. SAHARA: BOUMEDIENE WAS "VIOLENT" IN HIS ATTACKS ON MOROCCO AND FRANCE. HE SEEMED TO VIEW HASSANS POSITION OVER WESTERN SAHARA AS A PERSONAL CHALLENGE TO WHICH HE REACTED WITH GREAT EMOTION. BOUMEDIENE WAS ESPECIALLY CRITICAL OF FRENCH "NEO-COLONIALISM" AND HE CHARGED THAT FRENCH WISHED TO "DISMANTLE" ALGERIAN REGIME. BOUMEDIENE ASKED--ALMOST TO POINT OF DEMANDING--THAT TUNISIA JOIN IN ACTION WITH ALGERIA AGAINST MOROCCO AND FRANCE. TUNISIA REFUSED BOUMEDIENE'S REQUEST CATEGORICALLY SAYING "THIS IS NOT TUNISIAN WAY."

4. TUNISIAN OFFICIALS TOLD BOUMEDIENE THEY RECOGNIZED SITUATION WAS DANGEROUS AND SEEMED FROZEN WITH BOTH SIDES TAKING IRRECONCILABLE POSITIONS. GOT EXPRESSED HOPE THAT SITUATION WOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO DETERIORATE
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AND THAT EVENTUALLY SOME COMPROMISE SOLUTION COULD BE FOUND. GOT REITERATED ITS OFFER TO BE OF ASSISTANCE ANY TIME BOUMEDIENE THOUGHT TUNISIA COULD BE USEFUL IN RECONCILIATION, BUT WOULD BECOME INVOLVED ONLY IF TUNISIAN ROLE WAS DESIRED BY BOTH ALGERIA AND MOROCCO.

BOUMEDIENE WAS TOLD UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES WOULD TUNISIA DO ANYTHING TO DRIVE TWO PEOPLES FURTHER APART, BUT BY SAME TOKEN, IT STOOD READY TO DO WHAT EVER POSSIBLE TO DEFUSE SITUATION WHICH POSES SUCH GRAVE DANGER TO ENTIRE AREA.

5. MIDDLEEAST: BOUMEDIENE WAS EQUALLY VEHEMENT IN HIS COMMENTS REGARDING SADAT. HE MADE IT CLEAR ALGERIA WAS TOTALLY IN OPPOSITION TO CURENT EGYPIAN/ISRAELI TALKS AND THAT HIS OBJECTIVE WAS TO BRING ABOUT SADAT'S DOWNFALL. BOUMDEIENE URGED TUNIISIA TO JOIN ALGERIAN EFFORTS TO THIS END, INCLUDING PARTICIPATION IN ECONOMIC AS WELL AS "INFORMATIONAL" BOYCOTT AGAINST EGYPT.

6. THIS TUNISIA REFUSED TO DO. GOT EXPLAINED THAT TUNISIA HAD BELIEVED ALL ALONG SADAT'S

INITIATIVES WERE ILL-ADVISED AND ILL-TIMED, BUT TUNISIA NEVERTHELESS HAD HOPED THEY WOULD BE SUCCESSFUL. EVIDENCE NOW IS THAT THEY HAVE FAILED COMPLETELY, AS ISRAEL GAVE NO INDICATION OF WILLINGNESS TO MAKE KIND OF CONCESSIONS REQUIRED TO MAINTAIN MOMENTUM. THIS WAS A TRAGIC REALITY BUT NOTHING COULD BE ACHIEVED BY BRINGING DOWN SADAT. IN FACT, MUCH COULD BE LOST.

7. MEJDOUB COMMENTED THAT HE DOUBTED TUNISIAN CALL FOR MODERATION HAD MUCH AFFECT ON BOUMEDIENE. GOT VIEW REMAINS THAT INTER-ARAB DISPUTES CAN ONLY BE SOLVED IN MEETINGS AT WHICH ALL PARTIES TAKE PART, AND CONSEQUENTLY TUNISIA WILL NOT PARTICIPATE IN ANY FACTIONAL GATHERINGS. TUNISIA'S LOCATION NEXT DOOR TO ALGERIA MADE SITUATION CONFIDENTIAL

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EXTREMELY DELICATE FOT GOT, AND HE SAID GOT IS ANXIOUS TO COOPERATE WITH ALGERIA AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE. TUNISIA IS NOT PREPARE, HOWEVER, TO CHANGE ITS POLICIES ON THE SAHARA AND THE MIDDLE EAST AS RADICALLY AS BOUMEDIENE HAD DESIRED.

8. MEJDOUB ALSO COMMENTED THAT FIRST MEETING OF UNION OF ARAB YOUTH TO BE HELD IN TUNISIA THIS WEEK MIGHT PRESENT SOME "DIFFICULT MOMENTS" BUT THAT OBSERVERS MUST RECALL "THE EXCESSES OF YOUTH" AND NOT GIVE UNDUE IMPORTANCE TO THIS MEETING OR WHAT MIGHT BE SAID. (NOTE: ANNOUNCEMENT OF ARAB YOUTH MEETING TO BE HELD IN TUNIS JAN. 18-21 WAS MADE IN LOCAL PRESS MORNING OF JANUARY 17.) MULCAHY

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